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Royal Geographical Society.

1836.

AT THE

GENERAL MEETING, MAY 16, 1836,

The following Report from the Council was read :—

The Council again report to the Society the state of its affairs.

Finances.—The financial aspect of the Society continues satisfactory. The extraordinary expense incurred during the last year consists of 175*l.* towards the expedition behind British Guiana, of which the plan has been before explained, and the operations will be subsequently detailed ; and of 74*l.* 8*s.* paid for the purchase of books and maps. One item of extraordinary receipt appears in the balance-sheet annexed, viz.—1000*l.* received from his Majesty's Government to account of the two expeditions behind British Guiana, and in the interior of South Africa, in which the Society takes an interest ; but exclusive of this, there is little to invite particular attention in the year's accounts,—excepting only the gratifying fact, that adding the payments now made to preceding ones on account of the two expeditions, the Society has already advanced nearly its whole original subscription to them—500*l.*,—out of its ordinary income, without touching its capital stock invested in the funds : a gratifying proof, the council is willing to think, of its continued prosperity.

Publications.—The Society's Journal has been again, in 1835, as in former years, published in two parts ; and the first part of that for

1836 is now, on the same plan, laid on the table. The demand for it by the public, exclusive of the copies issued gratuitously to members, continues; and the sum of 112*l.* has been received in the present year from the Society's publisher on account of sales made during that to which the present report refers. Credit will, accordingly, be found taken for this sum in the annexed estimate of the probable receipt and expenditure of the current year.

The Society's other publications, announced in the report of last year, have not yet advanced to maturity. Some unexpected delays, arising from the nature of the work, have occurred in bringing forward Mr. Howse's Grammar of the Cree Language; and the unfortunate death of Mr. Macdougall of Copenhagen, who was drowned at Largs, in Scotland, while on his way to London in October last, has in like manner delayed the appearance of his translation of Captain Graah's Account of recent Danish discoveries on the East Coast of Greenland. Both the M.S. and map connected with this publication are, however, now received; and it seems scarcely doubtful that both it and the Cree Grammar will appear within the present year.

His Majesty's Donation.—The Royal Premium for 1835 was awarded by the council to Captain Back, for his recent Arctic discoveries; and was bestowed, as all the previous premiums have been, in money, as received from his Majesty's privy purse. The subject of converting a portion of it, however, into a medal, has been long under the consideration of the council; and after examining a variety of devices for this purpose, two were lately submitted to his Majesty, and his gracious pleasure was taken both as to the question of converting a portion of his annual donation into a medal, and on the choice between the selected devices. In consequence, a near prospect appears of concluding this arrangement. His Majesty has been pleased to approve both of a medal generally, and of one particular device for it; a drawing of which has accordingly been placed in the hands of Mr. Wyon, who is now engaged in completing it; and the expense of this will be found in the estimate for the current year.

Auxiliary Associations.—No further accessions of strength or funds of this kind have been received since the last annual meeting. But the Council cannot omit the present opportunity of acknowledging, with much gratitude, the zeal and exertions of the Bombay branch society in promoting its general objects. Within the last year some extremely valuable communications have been received from it, some of which have been published in last year's Journal, while others appear in the Part now laid on the table. Some other papers also have been received within the last few days.

Original Expeditions.—In these the last year has been unusually abundant; and, as in some of them the Society has been led to take a peculiar interest, the Council feel it a duty to advert to them here somewhat in detail.

The first in interest, and also in date, is Captain Back's, to which, as already noticed, the Council awarded his Majesty's Royal Premium for last year; and the general facts concerning it are so well known, that perhaps little need be said here regarding them. It will be seen, however, by a reference to the Part of the Journal now laid on the Society's table, that the discoveries made in the course of this expedition have powerfully revived public curiosity regarding the geography of the Arctic shores of America; and that the Council was induced, consequently, to appoint a Committee to examine various plans submitted for its further investigation. Communications of this kind were accordingly received from the President of the Society Sir John Barrow, from Sir John Franklin, Dr. Richardson, Captain Beaufort, and Sir John Ross; and these were eventually laid before his Majesty's government by a deputation of the Council, composed of the Earl of Ripon, Sir John Franklin, and Captain Back, who were commissioned to express at the same time the earnest desire of the Council and Society to see one or more of the plans explained in them carried into effect. The consequence has been that his Majesty's government has been pleased to attend favourably to these representations. Captain Back has been appointed to the command

of his Majesty's ship *Terror*, and to proceed with her to Wager River, on the western shore of Sir Thomas Roe's Welcome. He is there to ascertain the most convenient place for transporting boats and stores across the intervening isthmus; and, having placed his ship in security, he is to proceed, with the resources thus placed at his command, both north and west along the shores of Regent's Inlet, to connect the point whence he will thus start, both with Hecla and Fury Strait and Point Turnagain. The utmost diligence is using to expedite his outfit; and it is hoped that he may be able to proceed in his enterprise by the first week of June.

An extremely interesting voyage was also made last year by Lieutenant Smyth, of the Royal Navy, down a portion of the Huallaga and Ucayali rivers to the Amazons, and down the latter to the sea. Lieutenant Smyth was serving in his Majesty ship *Samarang*, on the coast of Peru, when the proposal was made to him by the merchants of Lima, to undertake this service; and although, in some degree, he has been unsuccessful in the principal object proposed, viz., an attempt to descend the Pachetea to the Ucayali, and thus determine the quality of the upper navigation of this river, yet, by the observations which he was enabled to make of the general character of the country, and the hearsay information concerning it which he was otherwise enabled to procure, he has left little, or it may be said no doubt of the general fact that from Pozuzu, on the Pachetea, 80 miles from Huanuco, 120 from Cerro di Pasco, and 300 from Lima, an easy navigable passage exists to the Atlantic, were the banks of the rivers cleared of the barbarous tribes which infest some parts of them: a fact which may prove, at no distant period, of great importance—Upper Peru and Bolivia apparently super-abounding in marketable commodities, and requiring only the habit of trade with Europe to have their resources developed.

The precise accessions to geography made by Lieutenant Smyth consist otherwise in the determination, in many cases astronomically, of a number of points along the rivers above-mentioned; of the rectification, accordingly, of their course, as previously laid down; of

some detailed statements regarding the Rio Negro, resting on the authority of a Portuguese priest residing at Barra, which are contained in a paper now published, addressed by Mr. Smyth to the Society, and in the views given by him of the state of the native Indians in this direction. For these matters in detail, reference must be made to his published work.

The two expeditions directly patronized by the Society next claim notice. Of these, the one into the interior of South Africa from Delagoa Bay has been entirely suspended by the Caffre war; and a year has thus been lost in its prosecution. This interval, however, it is not to be doubted that Captain Alexander has turned to account by gaining experience in South African manners, and facility in the use of the native tongues; and he is probably at this moment leaving the Cape on his original errand, better prepared than he could have been last year to accomplish the task before him. Mr. Schomburgh, on the other hand, has entered on his field of inquiry; and the Council has already received two detailed reports of his proceedings, which would have been now published, but that they are as yet imperfect from the want of a sketch map. The following abstract, however, will exhibit his general progress.

His instructions were as follows:—

I.—*Regent-street, 19th Nov. 1834.*—“SIR,—I am now authorized and directed by the Council of the Royal Geographical Society to pledge it definitively to co-operate with you in carrying into effect an expedition of discovery into the interior of British Guiana, on the following conditions:—

“1. The expedition is to have two distinct objects, viz.—first, thoroughly to investigate the physical and astronomical geography of the interior of British Guiana: and, secondly, to connect the positions thus ascertained with those of M. Humboldt on the Upper Orinoco. The second of these undertakings is not to be begun till the first is completed; and the two together are to occupy a period of three years from the time of your departure from George Town in the prosecution of your journey.

“ 2. Towards the expense the Society will contribute 900*l.*, viz.—600*l.* the first year, the outfit, estimated at 200*l.*, and all pecuniary advances whatsoever, included; and 300*l.* during the two following years, to be advanced in such proportions as may seem mutually most desirable. The Society will also procure you such letters of introduction and recommendation as may seem calculated to promote the objects of the expedition. But it will not be responsible for any debts or expenses which you may incur beyond the sums above specified.

“ 3. In return you are to proceed to Demerara, at your early convenience, and there report your arrival to his Excellency Sir James Carmichael Smyth, Bart., or other, the Governor of that colony for the time being; receiving instructions from him in the name of the Society, and acting at all times on these instructions to the best of your ability.—(For the general nature of these instructions, but subject to modification as may seem afterwards expedient, see my accompanying letter of this date, marked No. II.)

“ 4. All geographical information obtained by you during the above period of three years, whether physical, political, or astronomical, shall be considered the property of the Society, and at its disposal to be published in any manner it may think fit. But collections of natural history shall be your property,—with the exception of one set of any collections you may make of dried plants, birds, fishes, or insects, which the Council would be happy to have it in its power to present, in your name, to the British Museum; and one set of any geological specimens procured, which it would, in like manner, desire to present (if possible with accompanying memoirs from you) to the Geological Society of London.

“ I am also authorized by the Council to inclose you a draft for 50*l.* (which I must, at the same time, remind you will be deducted, together with the expense of outfit, from the 600*l.* allowed for the first year) to defray your current expenses to Demerara; and your negotiating this draft will be considered an expression of your acquiescence in the above terms.

“ I have the honour, &c.

(Signed)

“ A. MACONOCHE.”

II.—*Regent-street, 13th Nov. 1834.*—“SIR,—Referring to my letter No. I., of this date, I now proceed to sketch out the general views entertained by the Council of what your proceedings should be, on, and subsequent to, your arrival in Demerara. Substantially, too, it is presumed that these will be adhered to; though it does not appear desirable to complete their detail till you shall have seen Sir Carmichael Smyth, and ascertained his opinions on the subject.

“You will observe that the objects of the expedition are specific, and more limited than were originally contemplated in your sketch. This arises partly from the extreme desire of the Society, in return for the patronage extended to the undertaking by his Majesty’s Government, to do full justice to the physical geography of the colony of British Guiana,—partly to the extended, and about to be renewed, labours of the Geographical Society of Paris in French Guiana, which promise to render investigations in that direction unnecessary, the French travellers there having instructions to connect their observations with yours.

“Accordingly, the Council wishes you to understand most distinctly that, for the first year, or eighteen months, every thing is to be subordinate to the object of thoroughly investigating the physical character and resources of that portion of the central ridge traversing this part of South America, which furnishes tributaries to the Demerara, Essequibo, and other rivers flowing into the Atlantic, within, or immediately contiguous to the British colony of Guiana. The limits of this may be roughly defined to be the meridians of 55° and 62° west longitude from Greenwich; and the general character of its mineral composition, with detailed accounts of its plants, animals, and inhabitants, and the astronomical determination of a reasonable number of its principal points, will be required of you before you proceed further. Particulars regarding its soil and climate, the origin and course of its rivers, the degree in which they may be severally navigable, or capable of being made so, &c. will also occupy your attention; and generally, whatever may tend to give an exact idea both of the actual state and future capabilities of this tract of country.

“When your researches here shall be completed, then, but not till

then, it is contemplated that you may pass the mountains, and extend your views to the further interior. The great object in this, as already intimated, will be to connect your positions with those of M. Humboldt on the Upper Orinoco ; for as the French travellers will bring down their labours from the eastward, it will only remain for you to proceed westerly. In attempting this, the Council, as at present informed, is against your descending the Rio Branco, as you propose,—afterwards to ascend the Rios Negro and Padaviri. Much of this tract is already known ; and if there be any jealousy whatever on the part of the Indians against the Spanish colonists, it will be more difficult for you to ascend the Orinoco from Esmeralda than to descend it by keeping the height of land throughout. But regarding this, it will probably be in your power to make important communications while yet employed within the colony, so that it is unnecessary at present to enlarge on it.

“ Your proposed expedition up the Cuyuny to explore the Sierra Imataca would be interesting, if practicable with a due attention to the other objects of the expedition. But as this district is not within British Guiana, and a minute knowledge of it would not further your ulterior views,—besides which, it is easily accessible at any time, and its investigation now would cause an expense which might be inconvenient,—it must not be made a first object. With regard to it you should be guided entirely by the opinions and advice which you may receive, particularly from Sir Carmichael Smyth, at Demerara.

“ The expedition into the interior cannot be begun till August ; consequently, in so far as regards it, your arrival at Demerara before June is of little importance. But if you attach extreme value to Imataca yourself, and think that you can accomplish a journey to it between the time of your earliest possible arrival at Demerara and the month of August, then you are at liberty to proceed thither earlier ;—always remembering, however, both that the expense of such a journey, even if sanctioned by Sir Carmichael Smyth, must be deducted from the entire funds provided,—and also, that if deemed imprudent, or otherwise inexpedient, by him, it will not be allowed at all.

“ Other circumstances connected with the present state of the co-

lony of Demerara seem to offer additional reasons against your precipitating your measures. But having thus fully explained the views of the Society on the subject, something must necessarily be left, in conclusion, to your own judgment and discretion.

“I have the honour, &c.

(Signed) “A. MACONOCHE.”

In pursuance of these instructions, then, Mr. Schomburgh left George Town, Demerara, on the 21st of September last, and remained some days at the post at the confluence of the Cuyuny with the Essequibo, engaging Indian rowers and other attendants to accompany him. He availed himself of this interval to ascend the Cuyuny some little distance, and to gain a cursory knowledge of its upper navigation. This, he was told, continues uninterrupted almost to its source, where, being separated by only a short portage from the Carony, the Indians are in the habit of crossing to that river; and by descending it and ascending the Orinoco, maintaining an inland communication even with Angostura. Quitting the Cuyuny, Mr. Schomburgh next ascended the Essequibo; and in his reports gives a lively picture of the richness and exuberance of the vegetation on its banks. He and his party suffered much fatigue and some sickness at this time, but, overcoming all difficulties, they entered the Ripanuny on the 23rd October. Ascending this, they then entered the Creek of Anna-y, which falls into it on its right bank, about twenty miles above its confluence with the Essequibo; and here, at what is usually considered the S.W. extremity of the British colony, they formed a temporary habitation, or head-quarters, whence they proposed to diverge in all directions, as occasion might serve, in the prosecution of their purpose, thoroughly to ascertain the mineral and vegetable character of the neighbourhood. From this point, therefore, Mr. Schomburgh's first report was dated—the period the 29th October; his second brings the account of his proceedings down to the 15th January, 1836. The interval had been passed in ascending the Ripanuny as far as it had been found possible to push the lightest

canoe, which was to lat. $2^{\circ} 36' N.$, whence it appears that the sources of this river are further south than have been imagined; and Mr. Schomburgk thinks that they are at least in 1° or $1^{\circ} 30' N.$, but they were not actually reached by him. His descriptions of the country thus penetrated by him are interesting, from the high character of fertility which he attributes to it; but until his map shall arrive little can be made of his topography. He diverged at intervals from the course of the river, and thus visited Lake Amucu, stood on the highest ridge of the Parima mountains, examined their structure and vegetation, in particular brought away specimens of the plant from which the famous Wourali poison is extracted, and examined carefully the indications of mineral wealth which the rocks contain. The Council hopes shortly to be able to communicate the whole results in a more satisfactory manner to the Society, when the remaining materials for doing so shall have arrived.

The expedition to the Euphrates under Colonel Chesney went out so well provided with scientific instruments and observers, that there can be no doubt that many interesting details regarding the geography of that river and its neighbourhood will eventually be obtained through its means; but as yet no communications of this sort have been received from it.

An interesting and important expedition went from the Cape of Good Hope last year, to endeavour to penetrate beyond the utmost extent yet gained to the N.E. by the missionaries and traders; and a gentleman, Dr. Smith, was placed at its head, who, by his general knowledge of natural history, seemed well calculated to make the most of the opportunity which would be thus afforded of determining the physical, as well as astronomical geography of the interior in this direction. Accordingly, after an absence, in all, of nearly nine months, he has recently returned to the Cape with a large collection of observations and specimens, it is said, of great interest. The particulars are not yet precisely ascertained; but it would appear that the expedition had penetrated beyond the parallel of Delagoa Bay, though without reaching the Great Lake said to exist north of Kurri-

chane. The inhabitants had been everywhere found friendly, without any apparent existence among them of a slave trade, or much intercourse of any kind with the coast; and occupied, as the other natives of this portion of the African interior, with agriculture and pasture. A severe drought, which visited them this last year, and also much inconvenienced Dr. Smith and his party, had generally reduced them to severe distress.

Another expedition, but on a smaller scale, also left England in October last for the interior of Africa; but it has not, as yet, made much progress. It was headed by a gentleman of the name of Davidson, who defrayed the whole expense himself, and proposed, if possible, to proceed by way of Fez to Tafielt, and thence, after examining the southern slope of Mount Atlas, to Nigritia across the Sahara. The first part of this project has been already foiled, the Emperor of Marocco not having allowed Mr. Davidson to proceed by way of Tafielt, but required him to follow the route by Mogadore and Wady-Noon. In the remainder he expects great assistance from the attendance of a native of Timbuctoo, a very remarkable man, of whom, and of the information furnished by him, a detailed account will be found in Part 1, Vol. VI., of the Journal. Both travellers, when last heard of, were in good health at Mogadore.

Foreign and Colonial Correspondence.—The vacancy in the list of foreign honorary members, which existed last year, has been filled up since by the election of Admiral de Hamelin, *Chef du Dépôt de la Marine Royale de France*. Several additional corresponding members have been also elected within the year; and the Council has great pleasure in witnessing the gradual and steady increase of the foreign and colonial correspondence of the Society.

Library.—A list of the accessions made to the library within the year is laid on the table with this Report, and will be printed with it. The progress made towards obtaining a suitable collection of books and maps is still far from satisfactory.

Ch.

Dr.

[illegible]

November 1st.—The Society has to regret the loss of the services of its late Secretary, Captain Maconochie, R.N., who has accepted an office under Government in Van Diemen's Land. On his resignation being tendered, on the 1st of June, the Council unanimously came to the following Resolutions, directing them to be made known to the Members of the Society, and to be inserted in the Minutes of its Proceedings.

Resolved:—That, in announcing to the Society the resignation of their late Secretary, Captain A. Maconochie, R.N., the Council feel it incumbent on them to record, in the most public manner, their unqualified approbation of the manner in which Captain Maconochie has performed the duties of Secretary, and, at the same time, the regret they feel that the Society is about to be deprived of his services.

Captain Maconochie was among the foremost promoters of the Royal Geographical Society, and has never failed to evince the warmest zeal for its prosperity, and to devote himself at all times, and under all circumstances, to the furtherance of the views for which it was established.

In the preparation of the various matters of business for the meetings of the Council, and for the Ordinary and General Meetings of the Society,—in the immediate management of the finances of the Society, under the Council and Treasurer,—in the superintendence of the operations required for the publication of the Journal of the Society, all the papers in which have undergone the most rigid scrutiny on his part, to insure their accuracy, and many of which are wholly due to the zeal and labour with which he has abstracted the most valuable matter from documents too voluminous to be published *in toto*,—and in the candour, judgment, and temper, which he has always evinced in the discharge of his duties as Secretary,—Captain Maconochie has shown himself in every respect worthy of the confidence which has been reposed in him by the Royal Geographical Society in general, as well as by the Presidents and Councils by which the affairs of the Society have been successively administered.